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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1631
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 5405

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, PDEV, PINT, PFOR, BG
SUBJECT: BANGLADESH TWO YEARS AFTER--SECULARISM, NATIONALISM, DEMOCRACY

REF: DACCA 5403

A. FORWARD
IN A SPEECH SHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN TO BANGLADESH FROM PAKISTAN, PRIME MINISTER MUJIBUR RAHMAN ASKED HIS PEOPLE FOR THREE YEARS IN WHICH TO MOVE SIGNIFICANTLY TOWARD REALIZATION OF GOALS OF REVOLUTION AND LIBERATION STRUGGLE. THESE HAVE BEEN ENSHRINED IN FOUR PRINCIPLES OF STATE, UNDER TERM "MUJIBBAD": SECULARISM, NATIONALISM, DEMOCRACY, AND SOCIALISM. ON EVE OF SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF LIBERATION, AS MUJIB'S THIRD YEAR BEGINS, WHAT HAVE BEEN THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES, AND HOW MUCH MORE TIME DOES PRIME MINISTER HAVE TO MAKE BANGLADESH INTO A VIABLE NEW NATION STATE?
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ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES

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1. SECULARISM-SECULARISM HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AS BASIC PRINCIPLE OF STATE. REPUDIATING "TWO-NATION THEORY" THAT WAS FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN, NEW BD CONSTITUTION BANS ALL COMMUNAL, RELIGIOUS AND REGIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS. APPEALS TO COMMUNAL PREJUDICES HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED. DURGA PUJA CLASHES OF OCTOBER 1972 WERE QUICKLY PUT DOWN. BDG HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL OR AT LEAST FORTUNATE IN AVOIDANCE OF SERIOUS COMMUNAL CONFLICT SO FAR.
2. MUSLIM/HINDU COMMUNALISM REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ISSUE, HOWEVER, FIGURING PROMINENTLY IN CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES IN UNITED FRONT AND OPPOSITION PARTIES; IN PART IT UNDERLIES DIVISION OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM INTO PRO-AND ANTI-INDIAN FORCES. AWAMI LEAGUE (AL) HAS PUT RABIDLY ANTI-INDIAN MAULANA BHASHANI PARTICULARLY ON DEFENSIVE ON THIS ISSUE BY CLAIMING HE FOSTERS COMMUNALISM AND, BY IMPLICATION, SEDITIOUS MUSLIM BANGLA MOVEMENT. BHASHANI, HOWEVER, AS IMPUTED INSTIGATOR OF VARIOUS CONSPIRACIES AGAINST STATE, HAS RECENTLY DRAWN LESS ATTACK FROM REGIME THAN THE NEW THREAT--MISCREANTS OF "NAXALITE" EXTREMIST PARTIES.
3. SECULARISM STILL RUNS COUNTER TO DEEP-SEATED SENSE OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF MOST BENGALEES, WHOSE WHOLE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY UNTIL NOW HAD BEEN CAST IN COMMUNAL TERMS. COMMUNAL TENSION COULD EASILY BE REVIVED UNDER RIGHT CONDITIONS, SUCH AS FURTHER DETERIORATION LAW AND ORDER OR ECONOMIC JILURE, PARTICULARLY ACUTE FOOD SHORTAGES. TRENDS SUCH AS NOSTALGIA WHICH IS NOW SURFACING FOR ORDERLY DAYS OF ISLAMIC PAKISTAN AND LATENT ANTI-INDIANIFIM COULD, IN COMBINATION WITH INCREASING FRUSTRATIONS OF PEOPLE AND WIDESPREAD TENDENCY TOWARD SEEKING SCAPEGOATS, LEAD TO RESURGENCE OF COMMUNALISM AND ISLAMIC FERVOR, CAPABLE OF BEING EXPLOITED BY POLITICAL ELEMENTS.
4. NATIONALISM-BD HAS ESTABLISHED ITS CREDENTIALS AS AN EQUAL SOVEREIGN MEMBER OF WORLD COMMUNITY, HAS GAINED RECOGNITION OF 115 COUNTRIES, AND MEMBERSHIP IN MOST INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (EXCEPT UNGA). BD HAS FOLLOWED WELL-WORN PATHS INTERNATIONALLY AS NON-ALIGNED STATE. THIS HAS IN REALITY MEANT CLOSE TIES WITH INDIA WHICH HELPED WIN OD'S INDEPENDENCE; DEVELOPMENT OF THE SENSE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER THIRD-WORLD NATIONS WHICH, IN AL RHETORIC, WERE ALSO VICTIMIZED BY IMPERIALIST OPPRESSION; AND THE BURNISHING OF ITS "SOCIALIST" CREDENTIALS THROUGH PARTICULARLY FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. IN ITS VAGUE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH SOUTHEAST ASIAN IDENTITY TO ESCAPE SOMEWHAT FROM SHADOW OF INDIA, BD HAS MADE OVERTURES TO ITS NEIGHBORS TO EAST WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN
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RECIPROCATED TO ANY GREAT DEGREE. RECOGNITION OF PRG, IN FACT, SET BD APART FROM THOSE IT HAS BEEN CULTIVATING OUTSIDE OF INDOCHINA. WHILE THERE IS NO EVIDENCE BD WILL STRAY FROM PREDICTABLE PATTERN OF NON-ALIGNMENT FOLLOWED SO FAR, REACTION TO DOMESTIC INTERNAL CRITICISM AND A DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION AND AID FROM CHINA MAY MODIFY BD TIES WITH INDIA AND USSR IN FUTURE.
5. SENSE OF NATIONAL CHARACTER AND PURPOSE HAS NOT YET REALLY DEVELOPED WITHIN BD. DIVISIVENESS PERMEATES FABRIC OF SOCIETY.

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SYMPTOMATIC OF THIS ARE LACK OF DISCIPLINE, BREAKDOWN IN LAW AND ORDER, EXTENSIVE CORRUPTION, LACK OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND COOPERATION, PERPETUATION OF REGIONALISM, AND FAILURE TO RESPOND TO CALLS FOR NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY. STILL SUFFERING ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY FROM DISRUPTIONS OF LIBERATION PERIOD, BENGALEES APPEAR TO BE CONCERNED BASICALLY ABOUT SURVIVAL OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN SITUATION OF EXTENSIVE POLITICAL/ECONOMIC INEQUITY. LITTLE RESPONSE IS ELICITED TO CALLS FOR SELF-SACRIFICE AND AUSTERITY IN ORDER TO BUILD NEW SOCIALISTIC BENGAL, PARTICULARLY WHEN PEOPLE SEE FAVORITISM, NEPOTISM, AND NEW WEALTH IN HANDS OF RULING PARTY ADHERENTS. SENSE OF DISILLUSION WITH GOVERNMENT HAS GROWN MARKEDLY IN STUDENT COMMUNITY AND OLDER MIDDLE-CLASS. STUDENTS SHOW SIGNS OF TURNING IN LARGER NUMBERS TO STUDENT LEAGUE AFFILIATED WITH "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALIST" JSD AND LEFT EXTREMIST GROUPS. MIDDLE CLASS UNHAPPY WITH SOCIALISM AND DETERIORATION OF THEIR TRADITIONAL STATUS; MANY ARE TRYING TO EMIGRATE, SEEING NO OPTIONS WITHIN BD.

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6. LAW AND ORDER CONTINUE TO DECLINE, WITH BURGLARIES, ROBBERIES, MURDERS, AND HIJACKINGS REPORTED FROM ALL DISTRICTS. NOTICEABLE TREND HAS DEVELOPED IN INCREASING NUMBER OF RAIDS ON POLICE STATIONS AND OUTPOSTS BY LARGE BANDS OF DACOITS IN SEARCH OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION. RAIDS LARGELY WORK OF SEPARATE BANDS OF EXTREMISTS OPERATING IN VARIOUS DISTRICTS, BUT MAY PROVE SERIOUS PROBLEM IN FUTURE.

7. NATIONALISM ESPOUSED BY AL, IN ADDITION, LACKS ONE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT: ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE SUCCESS OF BANGLADESH. DESPITE HYPERSENSITIVITY TO ANY HINTS BENGALEES NOT MASTERS OF THEIR OWN FATE AND BEHOLDEN TO OUTSIDERS, AL RHETORIC EVEN TWO YEARS AFTER LIBERATION CANTS EXCESSIVELY OF SINS OF PAKISTANIS AND "SINO-US IMPERIALISTS", WHO ARE PICTURED AS RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST ILLS OF SOCIETY AND WOULD NOW SEEK TO DESTROY BD. ALL CRITICISM IS CAST AS AN ATTACK ON THE INTEGRITY OF STATE. THIS FAILURE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY, THIS ALWAYS LOOKING ELSE-
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WHERE FOR CAUSE OF FAILURE, BE IT TO SOME NEBULOUS FOREIGN CONSPIRACY, LOCAL OPPOSITION, OR BUREAUCRACY, UNDERLIES DIVISIVENESS IN BD BODY POLITIC. UNLESS BDG CAN GENERATE POSITIVE SENSE OF NATIONALISM, EXTERNAL TRAPPINGS OF SYMBOL AND SOUND WILL FAIL THEM IN DEVELOPING TRUE SENSE OF DIRECTION IN THE NATION.

8. DEMOCRACY-A SOUTH ASIAN FORM OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED WITH PROMULGATION OF CONSTITUTION WITH SAFEGUARDS FOR BASIC FREEDOMS, HOLDING OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS A LITTLE OVER YEAR AFTER LIBERATION, ARRANGEMENTS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS, CONTINUATION OF MULTIPARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM, INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY, AND EXISTENCE OF FREEDOMS OF SPEECH AND THE PRESS. TO LARGE DEGREE, THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE REAL. EVEN THOUGH BASIC FREEDOMS HAVE BEEN HEDGED AND CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN RECENTLY AMENDED TO PROVIDE FOR PREVENTIVE-DETENTION LEGISLATION AND EMERGENCY POWERS WHICH WOULD SUPPRESS ALL RIGHTS, BD CONSTITUTION IS NEVERTHELESS DEMOCRATIC ONE WITHIN SUBCONTINENTAL TRADITION. DESPITE CHARGES THAT NATIONAL ELECTIONS LAST YEAR HAD BEEN RIGGED TO DEPRIVE OPPOSITION PARTIES OF LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATION, IT IS LIKELY THAT AL WOULD HAVE HAD COMFORTABLE MAJORITY IN ANY EVENT. AL'S OVERWHELMING MAJORITY, HOWEVER, HAS REDUCED NATIONAL PARLIAMENT LARGELY TO DEBATING FORUM WHICH, WHILE PRESERVING ALL CUSTOMARY FORMS, ACTS ESSENTIALLY AS RUBBER STAMP FOR DECISIONS OF AL PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS.

9. COURTS, THOUGH LARGELY OVERWORKED, HAVE MAINTAINED INDEPENDENCE, WITH SUFFICIENT DECISIONS GOING AGAINST GOVERNMENT TO PRECLUDE JUDGMENT THERE HAS BEEN ANY SUBSTANTIAL SUBVERSION OF SYSTEM. MUCH OF PRESS IS GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED, BUT OPPOSITION PAPERS FLOURISH, DESPITE VARIOUS FORMS OF HARRASSMENT AND SHUTDOWNS ON CHARGES RANGING FROM SEDITION TO ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF BUILDINGS.

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THERE IS NO MAJOR CENSORSHIP.
10. LIKE OTHER PARLIAMENTARY RULING PARTIES IN THE SUBCONTINENT, HOWEVER, AL HAS DISPLAYED BASIC DISCOMFORT WITH GIVE-AND-TAKE OF DEMOCRACY. SOME ELEMENTS OF PARTY HAVE USED FORCE NOT ONLY TO INTIMIDATE POLITICAL OPPONENTS BUT ALSO FURTHER THEIR OWN OPPORTUNISTIC ENDS. OPPOSITION FREQUENTLY CHARGES THAT AL'S USE OF RAKKI BAHINI TO SEARCH OUT AND ARREST MISCREANTS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY IN REALITY IS COVER TO DESTROY LEADERSHIP OF OPPOSITION. BUT USE OF VIOLENCE AND FORCE TO GAIN POLITICAL ENDS IS NOT RESTRICTED TO AL. TERRORISM OF LEFT EXTREMISTS BEARS OUT GOVERNMENT'S
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ASSERTION THAT EXTREMISTS' AIM IS TO DESTROY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM AS NOW CONSTRUCTED. MUCH VIOLENCE ALSO STEMS FROM PURELY LOCAL CAUSES SUCH AS FAMILY FEUDS OR BITTERNESS OVER RELIEF SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION, LAND, ETC. NET EFFECT HOWEVER IS TO UNDERMINE EFFORTS TO DEVELOP SENSE OF COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. VIOLENCE, CORRUPTION, VAGUE ALLEGATIONS AND TRUMPED-UP CHARGES FOR DETENTION ALL TEND, ALONG WITH DECLINING ECONOMIC SITUATION, TO ERODE CONFIDENCE THAT PEOPLE PLACED IN AL LEADERSHIP.
11. ABUSES OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, STILL HAVE NOT REACHED SCALE WHICH MIGHT CONSTITUTE IMMINENT THREAT TO PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IN BD. AL'S OVERWHELMING CONTROL OVER GOVERNMENT AND THE LACK OF SIGNIFICANTLY LARGE ORGANIZED OPPOSITION PERMITS BDG, BY AND LARGE, TO MAINTAIN DEMOCRATIC NORMS. THERE HAS NOT YET BEEN TRUE TEST OF DEMOCRACY IN BD BECAUSE GOVERNMENT RULE HAS NOT BEEN SERIOUSLY CHALLENGED.
NEWBERRY

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